

To Lead a Trump or Not

It's a Mystery

Books on Bridge Defense

- Always have a chapter on opening leads.
- There have been some whole books written on just the opening lead.
- One book written a long time ago, ended with this piece of really bad advice:
 - “When in doubt, lead trump.”
- Another book written by a one-time national bridge champion, said:
 - “Never lead trump, except when it is right.”

There are Obviously Times When You Shouldn't Lead Trump

- When it is likely to cost you a trick.
- When it is might cost partner a trick.
- When you have something more important to do.

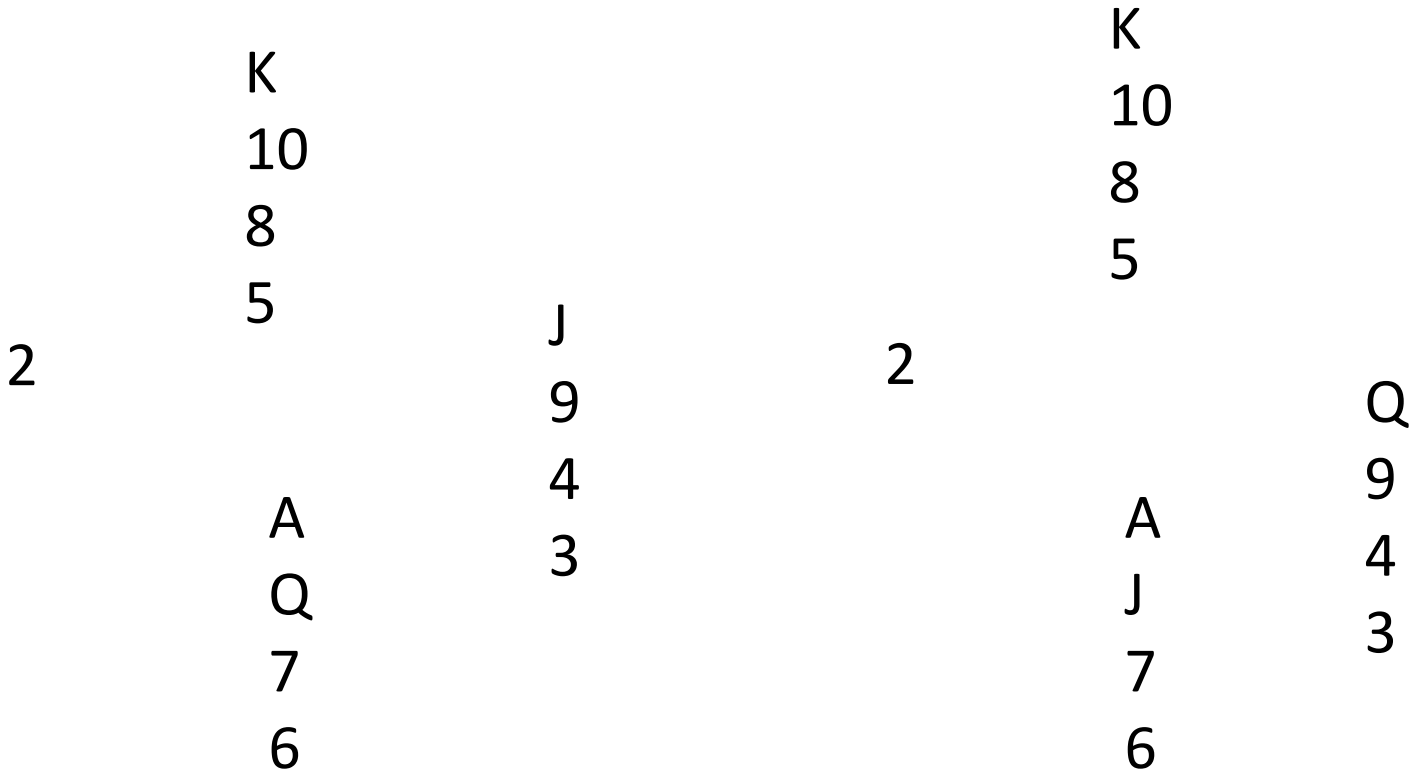
When It Might Cost You a Trick

	K			K	
	10			10	
	8			8	
	5			5	
J		Q	Q		J
2		6	2		6
		4			4
	A			A	
	9			9	
	7			7	
	3			3	

When It Might Cost You a Trick

	K			K	
	9			10	
	8			8	
	5			5	
J			Q		
4		10	9		4
2	A		2	A	
	Q			J	
	7			7	
	6			6	
	3			3	

When You Have a Singleton



You Might Want to Lead Trump When:

- ***You need to protect high-card values.***
- Partner has opened a strong no trump or, in some way has shown a strong balanced hand.
- Your opponents have taken a high-level sacrifice.
- You know they are depending on ruffing to gain tricks.

Example 1 (both vul)

♠ 8 5 2
♥ K 9 8 7 4
♦ 6 3
♣ 8 7 3

♠ J 10 9 7
♥ A Q 6 3
♦ A Q 10 7
♣ Q

♠ A K Q 6
♥ J 5 2
♦ 5 4
♣ J 10 5 4

♠ 4 3
♥ 10
♦ K J 9 8 2
♣ A K 9 6 2

North	east	south	west
1nt	2nt	dbld	3 ♣
pass	pass	dbld	all pass

Example 2 (both vul)

	North	east	south	west
	pass	1 ♠	2 ♣	2 ♥
	3 ♣	3 ♦	4 ♣	4 ♠
	pass	pass	5 ♣	dbld

♠ 3
 ♥ J 10 6 5 2
 ♦ J 8 2
 ♣ Q J 7 2

♠ K 10 5
 ♥ K Q 9 8 7 4
 ♦ K 5 4
 ♣ 8

♠ A Q 7 6 2
 ♥ A
 ♦ A 7 6 3
 ♣ 10 9 6

♠ J 9 8 4
 ♥ 3
 ♦ Q 10 9
 ♣ A K 5 4 3

You Might Want to Lead Trump, When:

- ***An opponent shows a 3-suited hand.***
- A bid of 2 ♦, in the precision system,
- Or with some hands playing Flannery
- Shows a 3-suited hand 11-15 points.
- Often their strength is based on ruffing power.
- It is unlikely, you can eliminate all their ruffing tricks, but if you can cut down on some of them, you might defeat the contract.

Example 4(Opponents playing Precision)

North east south west
2♦ pass 2♠ pass

♠ A Q 7 5

♥ Q 8 5 4

♦ J

♣ A Q 9 3

♠ K 8 6 3

♥ J 2

♦ K 8 6 2

♣ K 8 5

♠ 10 9 4 2

♥ K 6 3

♦ Q 4 3

♣ J 4 2

♠ J

♥ A 10 9 7

♦ A J 10 7 5

♣ 10 7 6

Example 5 (Opponents struggling to find a fit)

♠ J 8 6 5
 ♥ A J 6 3
 ♦ 8
 ♣ A K 6 4

♠ 2
 ♥ K 10 9 3
 ♦ Q 10 9 4
 ♣ Q 7 5 2

♠ K 10 9 7
 ♥ 5
 ♦ A K J 6 2
 ♣ 9 8 3

	North	east	south	west
	1 ♣	pass	1 ♦	pass
	1 ♥	pass	1 ♠	pass
	2 ♠	pass	4 ♠	all pass

♠ A Q 4 3
 ♥ Q 7 4 2
 ♦ 7 5 3
 ♣ J 10

Example 6(When you have strength in declarer's first bid suit)

	North	east	south	west
	---	----	1 ♠	pass
♠ 5	2 ♦	pass	2 ♥	pass
♥ A J 6 3	4 ♥	all pass		
♦ K Q J 9 8				
♣ K 4 2				
	♠ 4 3 2			
	♥ Q 2			
	♦ A 10 5 3			
	♣ 10 9 6 3			
	♠ K J 9 7 6			
	♥ K 10 8 5			
	♦ 6			
	♣ A J 8			

♠ A Q 10 8
 ♥ 7 5 2
 ♦ 7 4 2
 ♣ Q 7 5

Example 7(When partner passes your 1-level takeout double)

North	east	south	west
---	---	1 ♥	dbld
pass	pass	pass	

♠ 10 7 4
 ♥ 10 4
 ♦ 9 7 6 5 2
 ♣ 9 6 2

♠ Q 6 3
 ♥ A Q 8 7 5
 ♦ 8 4
 ♣ K 4 3

♠ K 8 2
 ♥ K 9 6 3 2
 ♦ A Q J
 ♣ 8 5

♠ A J 9 5
 ♥ J
 ♦ K 10 3
 ♣ A Q J 10 7

Example 8(When an opponent pulls her partner's penalty double)

♠ 7 4 3
 ♥ K 8 2
 ♦ 10 9 6 4
 ♣ A 10 5

♠ Q J 6 2
 ♥
 ♦ K 8 5 2
 ♣ 8 7 6 4 3

♠ A K 10 8 5
 ♥ Q 10 6 5
 ♦ A 7 3
 ♣ J

♠ 9
 ♥ A J 9 7 4 3
 ♦ Q J
 ♣ K Q 9 2

North	east	south	west
---	1 ♥	1 ♠	2 ♥
3 ♠	4 ♥	dbld	pass
4 ♠	all pass		

Example 9(When the bidding tells you to play a passive defense)

	North	east	south	west
	---	----	2 ♣	pass
♠ J 10 9	2 ♦	pass	2 ♥	pass
♥ A 9 4 2	3 ♥	pass	4nt	pass
♦ K 10 3	5 ♣	pass	5nt	pass
♣ 7 6 2	6 ♣	pass	7 ♥	all pass

♠ 8 4 3 2
 ♥ 7 5 3
 ♦ 9 8 7
 ♣ J 5 4

♠ 7 6 5
 ♥ 10
 ♦ Q 6 5 2
 ♣ Q 10 9 8 3

♠ A K Q
 ♥ K Q J 8 6
 ♦ A J 4
 ♣ A K

Example 10(When the bidding tells you to play a passive defense)

North	east	south	west
---	----	6 ♦	pass

♠ A 10 9 5 4 2
 ♥ 10 9 6 4
 ♦ A 6
 ♣ 8

7 ♦ all pass

♠ J 8 7 3
 ♥ A Q 8 7
 ♦ 4
 ♣ 10 7 3 2

♠ K Q 6
 ♥ K J 5 3 2
 ♦ 8 2
 ♣ Q J 9

♠
 ♥
 ♦ K Q J 10 9 7 5 3
 ♣ A K 5 4 3

Example 11(When the bidding tells you to play a passive defense)

North	east	south	west
1 ♣	pass	1 ♠	pass
2 ♠	pass	4 ♠	all pass

♠ A Q 9 3
 ♥ K 8 4 2
 ♦ 7 4
 ♣ A 10 6

♠ 8 4 2
 ♥ Q 10 9
 ♦ K 10 8 2
 ♣ K 7 5

♠ 10
 ♥ A 7 6 3
 ♦ 9 5 3
 ♣ J 9 8 4 2

♠ K J 7 6 5
 ♥ J 5
 ♦ A 8 6 2
 ♣ Q 3

Summary: When to Lead Trump

- To protect high-card strength.
 - Partner shows a strong balanced hand.
 - Opponents are obviously sacrificing.
- You want to stop ruffs
 - Opponents show a 3-suited hand.
 - Opponents bid three suits and end up in the 4th. suit.
 - You have strength in declarer's first bid suit.

Summary: When to Lead Trump

- Partner has passed your 1-level takeout double.
- Partner does not balance, when the bidding indicates he has strength.
- The bidding indicates you should play a passive defense.